socialist voice

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1977: year of 'Canadian unity' crisis

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By John Riddell and Frank Rooney

"Woe Canada."

That's the mood of Canada's capitalist rulers today, expressed by a Toronto *Globe and Mail* editorial headline December 15.

The economy appears "out of control on a downhill," says the *Globe*.

But that's not the end of it. The ruling class is confronted by crises at every turn. Each day brings new revelations of antidemocratic activities by the RCMP.

And over it all hang the shears of the Quebecois independence struggle, threatening the lifeline of the Canadian state.

The capitalists' response in 1977 was to attack working people and the oppressed: wage controls, layoffs, and cutbacks; a chauvinist campaign against Quebec; and stonewalling, stalling, and covering up of police harassment of those fighting for social change.

The capitalists' offensive scored some important victories in 1977, and they plan to continue it in 1978. But their problems are far from over.

And for the working class and its allies, 1978 holds the opportunity to launch a counteroffensive—not just to defend what we have already won, but to beat back the bosses' attacks, and to begin to shake the very foundations of capitalist rule.

United demonstration of three main Quebec labor federations. Quebec's pro-independence working class leads struggle for social change.

Defend Quebec self-determination

The most serious threat to Canadian capitalism today is the struggle for Quebec independence, which puts in question the survival of the Canadian state in its present form.

The Canadian ruling class has taken fright not so much of the PQ as of the militant nationalist working class that thrust it into office. They launched a massive campaign against Quebec in 1977. Their "Canadian unity" propaganda drive, replete with commissions and chauvinist "save Canada" committees, aimed to prepare public opinion for economic, political, and quite conceivably military intervention against Quebec.

In an attempt to forge a militant chauvinist bloc in defense of English-language privilege in Quebec, Prime Minister Trudeau stressed his "respect" for those defying Law 101, the PQ's modest legislation to protect the French language.

Leaders of the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) and the New Democratic Party (NDP) were quick to line up behind Trudeau's offensive. But they were challenged at many NDP and union conventions by supporters of Quebec's rights.

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labor, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), and the Alberta NDP showed the way, adopting resolutions unconditionally defending Quebec's right to self-determination.

Other unions, including the B.C. Federation of Labor, the autoworkers, and the steelworkers, also passed resolutions affirming Quebec's right to self-determination, but added passages expressing support for Canadian unity.

But no educational campaigns were carried to win the ranks to these positions.

The NDP and CLC brass are solidly behind the government's chauvinist campaign. The federal NDP convention and the Ontario Federation of Labor convention showed them in action: in both cases they fought for and won substantial majorities against any recognition of Quebec self-determination.

Effects of PQ victory

Inside Quebec, the PQ victory had contradictory effects. Nationalist sentiment received new impetus; millions now saw independence as a realizable goal. But it also led to a "wait-and-see" attitude among the working masses and an ebb in mass actions.

The trade-union bureaucracy, in tacit alliance with the PQ for some years, utilized illusions in the Parti Quebecois to collaborate more openly with the government.

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Government gone fishing

Union faces charge of being monopoly

By Bob Smith

VANCOUVER—If you want to have a lynching, the Ku Klux Klan likes to say, do it anonymously. And don't worry about the heat; the Sherriff's got the same kind of hood you have.

If you want to smash a union, the same avenues are open to you in Canada.

Another dangerous and concerted attack has been launched against the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU).

In October 1975, for the second time in 20 years, federal government investigation officers raided Vancouver UFAWU offices, taking 3,000 documents back to Ottawa with them. Their cover was the people's friend, the Consumer and Corporate Affairs Department—Combines Investigation Branch.

No reason was given for the raid and over a year later, December 1976, the combines branch scheduled secret hearings in Vancouver.

Several leading members of the union and the B.C. Federation of Labor were summoned to testify. Instead of testifying, they picketed the inquisition, demanding open hearings and full disclosure of the evidence.

The hearings were postponed.

In the spring of 1977 several Vancouver television and newspaper offices were raided by the same investigators. A great front page whimpering about freedom of the press went on for several days, but the investigators went away with all they wanted.

On the strength of evidence obtained from the media, seven UFAWU members were charged with unlawfully obstructing or impeding an inquiry of the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission. They face penalties of up to two years in jail and $5,000 fines.

Witch-hunt began in 1956

The last attack on the union began in 1956, and the timing was no coincidence. The union was involved in tough negotiations with packing companies at the time.

The Combines Investigation Branch investigated and investigated. They called witnesses from all the companies, all the scab outfits, and all the relevant government agencies.

They listened to one member of the UFAWU.

Three years later the investigators came down with a two-volume report saying the union had conspired to restrict trade and fix prices. They ruled everything the union had done in the previous 20 years to be illegal.

The fishermen, said the report, were "co-adventurers" with private business—the very thought turning most fishermen red with rage.

The 1959 ruling came despite documented proof in the report that the companies were holding secret meetings and fixing the prices paid to the fishermen.

As a result of the ruling the companies refused to negotiate with the UFAWU, saying they would be in violation of the act.

Though seriously weakened, the union prepared to go on strike. Surprised by this show of courage and facing the profitable salmon season, the companies and the government backed off. Parliament passed an act making the fishermen exempt under the combines act for a year.

This exemption has been extended yearly, and in 1975 was finally written into the present act. But of course a loophole was left in the exempting section for the use of the companies. Fishermen are exempted so long as it is in the "public interest."

Who's doing the monopolizing?

When the attacks began 20 years ago, the fishermen were bargaining with about a dozen companies. Since then two companies have combined to monopolize the fishing industry. One is part of the infamous Weston Food chain whose restrictive trade practices and price fixing have never been the subject of investigation.

But new Consumer Affairs Minister Allmand said in Vancouver that he is not against monopolies, so long as they are in the (fickle) "public interest."

In the context of the federal government's attack on workers and their organizations, the actions of the Combines Investigation Branch represent a serious attempt to smash the fishermen's union and a threat to others.

But they are going to have trouble doing that.

Twenty years ago the union (a number of whose leaders are Communist Party supporters) was not a member of the CLC because of the notorious antired campaigns of the 1940s and 50s. They are now part of the labor congress and have some CLC support.

A UFAWU defense campaign has been set up and various provincial labor federation conventions have voted to support it.

Their demands are:

- that Solicitor-General Francis Fox immediately drop the charges against the seven UFAWU members;
- that the Combines Investigation Branch cease once and for all its harassment of the UFAWU. If they want hearings, then they should be public and they should be part of a full investigation of the real monopolies—the food combines;
- that the provincial government give the same rights to fishermen as those accorded other B.C. workers.

Toronto SAVE report

Christmas gift: cutbacks

By Dennis Marlon

TORONTO—The Christmas season holds grim prospects for civic employees and working people here. This year's Yuletide gift is the report of Metro Council's Special Advisory Committee on Value for Expenditure (SAVE), which recommends layoffs, speedups, wage increases below the rate of inflation, less childcare, and a reduction in the city's social services.

Major recommendations of the report go before Metro Executive Committee this month and will be rushed to council in January. They include:

- Reducing Metro Toronto's payroll by 5 percent.
- Possible savings through contracting out Metro Toronto's cleaning and custodial work.
- Adoption of "the most economical means to provide day care services" in particular through "private organizations" and "private home day care." (Metro Toronto now operates about 20 daycare centers.)

Jobs

Payroll reductions will hit hardest at Toronto's lowest-paid, unskilled and semiskilled workers, most of whom are women. Looking to private firms for cleaning and custodial work threatens thousands of jobs in this category. And municipal unions will be severely weakened, since private firms hire non-union employees at minimum wage rates.

But you can bet your Christmas stocking that few, if any, jobs will be lost in the police department, which eats up 38 percent of the budget.

Childcare

The report's recommendations on childcare are particularly ominous. They amount to phasing out already-inadequate public centers in favor of private operations. This would represent a major move by the city away from its responsibility to provide childcare, and a blow to residents' right to receive it. In addition, private companies charge notoriously high prices and often provide substandard service.

The SAVE report is an attack on Toronto's social service workers, a recipe for increased unemployment, and an attack on working people's right to adequate social services. Its aim is to strengthen the capitalists' campaign to force people to work harder and expect less: "A genuine and clearly understood policy of restraint should be adopted by Council, so that its own members, the staff and the public will recognize that previous expectations about increases in expenditure will no longer apply."

A united response to the SAVE report is needed. Most members of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) locals 43 and 79 are social service workers. These locals must join with Toronto Transit Commission workers and childcare and other community organizations to oppose the report. All those affected by the report must say *no* to layoffs—whether imposed direc-layoffs—whether imposed directly or indirectly through at-services—these services are a right, not a privilege; and demand adequate wages to meet the rising cost of living.

CUPE Local 79 has set up a committee of rank-and-file unionists to begin such a response. It will analyze the report and its consequences and suggest ways to reach out to community activists and other unionists affected by the cuts.

socialist voice

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in brief

Gay rights battle goes to Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of Canada agreed December 14 to hear an appeal by the Vancouver Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) involving the Vancouver *Sun*'s refusal to publish an advertisement for the newspaper *Gay Tide*. GATE contends that this action contravenes British Columbia's human rights code.

Three years ago, GATE laid a complaint under the code. The *Sun* was ordered to carry the ad, but this decision was reversed by B.C. Court of Appeals. The B.C. Supreme Court refused to hear GATE's appeal.

The Supreme Court's decision to hear the case is a step forward for the gay liberation movement. Supporters of gay rights across the country will want to help Vancouver GATE in this major legal battle.

Demand freedom for imprisoned Chileans

A petition campaign has been launched in Canada calling for the release of five Chileans arrested by Pinochet's police November 29.

Those arrested have been identified by the Santiago daily *El Mercurio* as Carlos Arturo Altamirano Corder, Hector Victor Gomez Arellana, Jose Gabriel Cea Munoz, Mario Roberto Godoy Jara, and Rosa Ester Fuentes Polanco.

The Chilean police allege that the five are members of the Liga Comunista, a Trotskyist organization. They are being charged with holding "regular meetings of a subversive character."

The petition calls for the immediate release of the five and for a halt to arrests and detentions of individuals because of their political or religious views.

Efforts to circulate the petition are underway in Edmonton, and its initiators request that it be circulated across the country as part of the efforts to win freedom for all Chilean political prisoners.

Copies of the petition can be obtained from Phil Courtney, 10815B 82 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 2B2.

Happy New Year!

Socialist Voice is taking a Christmas break. Our next issue will be dated January 23, 1978.

Our first issue in the new year will feature an interview with Canadian Union of Postal Workers' president Jean-Claude Parrot on the prospects before the labor movement in 1978.

Happy New Year!

Militant action needed to halt Sudbury layoffs

By Ken Goodwin

Demonstrators representing thousands of Sudbury workers facing massive layoffs at the Inco and Falconbridge mines in 1978 picketed Parliament Hill December 13, bringing with them 30,000 signatures demanding government action to stop the layoffs. But the solutions being proposed by both government and the unions concerned cannot adequately defend the workers' jobs and working conditions.

Following the announcement of the Inco layoffs, an October 23 rally of 1,000 angry workers heard and supported calls from a number of union leaders and NDP MPPs for nationalization of the nickel industry. This sentiment was strongly endorsed at the November 26-30 Ontario Federation of Labor convention where delegates rejected a weak leadership statement and instead put the OFL on the record for a campaign of mass action to demand that Inco be nationalized without compensation and operated under the control of the workers.

But up to this point the convention decision has been ignored. At a second Sudbury rally four days after the convention, the OFL policy was not even mentioned, despite OFL president Cliff Pilkey's presence as one of the platform speakers.

Instead Falconbridge workers have been convinced to support a "work-sharing plan" to save their jobs. The plan is being put to Falconbridge by Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Local 598. Local 6500 of the United Steelworkers (USW) so far has rejected such a proposal. Its proposal to Inco centers on an early retirement scheme. Both plans accept layoffs as inevitable and ask workers to bear the burden of the slump in the nickel industry.

Under the USW plan the 2,000 miners over 55 would be pressured to accept early retirement as a meager pension of $250 a month, women workers who have been laid off would not be rehired, and the present attrition rate would be maintained. Local 6500 has rejected the latest Inco proposal and the talks between the union and Inco have now broken off. Under the Local 598 plan Falconbridge workers would work only three out of every four weeks, collecting unemployment insurance on the fourth week. This amounts to a substantial pay cut with workers across the country subsidizing Falconbridge's profits through their unemployment insurance contributions.

Falconbridge Nickel Mines offers holiday cheer to hundreds of laid-off employees.

The resolution adopted by OFL delegates, on the other hand, projects a serious struggle to prevent the layoffs from taking place. It does not ask workers to take responsibility for the slump in the nickel industry. Ten years ago in the same spirit, 25,000 workers from across Cape Breton took to the streets in opposition to the threatened shutdown of the huge Hawker-Siddley steel mill. This campaign forced the provincial government to take over the mill.

A similar campaign could begin now by advancing the spring contract talks between Inco and USW Local 6500 to before the February Inco layoff deadline. If the bargaining were to center on the demand to stop the layoffs and be coordinated with contract talks at Stelco in Hamilton and Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, the strength of the 40,000 workers in the heavy steel industry could be brought to bear on both Inco and Falconbridge.

Backed by the kind of campaign called for by OFL delegates, Sudbury workers would have the muscle to beat back the layoffs and win support across the province for nationalizing the nickel industry.

Quebec unions protest PQ's 'antiscab' bill

MONTREAL—Quebec unionists are mobilizing for a national demonstration against the Parti Quebecois' proposed "antiscab" bill.

It is the first action by Quebec labor movement against the policies of the Parti Quebecois government.

The Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) and the Quebec Teachers Federation (CEQ) are calling on unionists to rally December 16 in front of the National Asssembly in Quebec City.

Bill 45 would permit the labor minister to determine the content of a union's first one-year contract by imposing an arbitration board. The government would gain the right to send inspectors to supervise a union's functioning and its votes. Any single worker who thought his or her union was acting undemocratically could secure the intervention of the Quebec labor minister.

The bill would decree that unions must include in their statutes provisions for a secret ballot in union elections and strike votes.

By contrast, one of the amendments to the bill now being proposed by Labor Minister Pierre-Marc Johnson would eliminate any obligation to hold a vote before ending a strike and sending the unionists back to work.

Even the provisions against strikebreakers are very limited and only apply to "legal" strikes. The labor minister's amendments further weaken them. If the union does not respect provisions for maintaining "essential services," such as those imposed in the hospitals by Law 253, the ban on strikebreakers will not apply.

The bill would also allow the bosses "to take necessary measures to avoid destruction or serious deterioration of their goods, equipment, or real estate."

Nearly 1,400 delegates participated in the December 4 Estates General of the CSN in Quebec City to discuss the amendments submitted by Labor Minister Johnson. The CSN and CEQ leaders have attacked these anti-union amendments as "concessions to the bosses and an insult to the workers."

Even within the Parti Quebecois the Johnson amendments have sparked a major debate. The Montreal riding associations have demanded and obtained convocation of a special meeting of the PQ's National Council. The Montreal Center executive meeting adopted November 27 a "harsh motion of censure" against Johnson and his amendments. Several PQ members of the assembly have voiced their disagreement.

The CSN and CEQ are organizing local meetings and picket lines in front of companies, government offices, and PQ headquarters to build the December 16 protest.

Even the small, right-wing Democratic Trade Union Federation opposes the law as an attack on trade-union autonomy.

Only the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) has refused to participate in this action, a stand which has seriously weakened the campaign against Bill 45. The leadership and a majority of delegates at the FTQ convention voted November 29 for the adoption of the bill before Christmas, suggesting only some rather minor changes.

The FTQ says it is ready to give "a fair test" to the system of compulsory arbitration for unions seeking their first contract. Despite the opposition of a good number of delegates, the convention decided not to oppose the clause permitting the bosses to use strikebreakers "to protect their property."

The amendments and the law as a whole confirm once more that the PQ is "favorably inclined" towards the interests of the employers. Proposed as a measure to stop strikebreaking, this law codifies a series of anti-union measures that even Bourassa never dared to propose.

Bill 45 is a trap for the union movement. We must fight for the entire bill to be withdrawn.

—translated from Lutte Ouvriere

More than 5,000 protest Bill 45

QUEBEC CITY—More than 5,000 union members and their supporters marched on the National Assembly here December 16. Many had travelled by bus from Montreal.

It was the first time since the Parti Quebecois government took office 13 months ago that police erected barricades in front of the assembly for a demonstration.

The most common slogan on hundreds of placards was "Down with Bill 45."

Other slogans reflected the growing disenchantment with the PQ. Printed signs read "PQ, firm against the federal government, on its knees before the bosses."

Members and supporters of the Revolutionary Workers League participated in the militant demonstration, leading chants like "PQ a bourgeois party, let's build a workers party."

New moods in OFL

By Naomi Jolliffe

Naomi Jolliffe was a delegate to the recent Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL) convention from Local 79 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). This article conveys her impressions of the convention.

It was one of the most important OFL conventions in years. What happened during the four-day convention revealed both the weakness of the OFL today and new possibilities for winning important changes in OFL policy in the future.

Many of the 1,300 delegates were from the largely male, white, and older membership of the large industrial unions. Some of them booed delegates supporting self-determination for Quebec and catcalled women who spoke in favor of setting up an OFL women's committee. Few delegates were women, and most of them came from CUPE.

That was one side of the OFL's 21st annual convention. The convention was manipulated by the leadership under OFL president Cliff Pilkey to avoid discussion of the biggest questions of the day. As a result the OFL is the only provincial federation of labor so far that has refused to declare its support for self-determination for Quebec. Central questions like the mass layoffs at Inco and Falconbridge didn't get discussed until the last day.

The juggled agendas, the adjournment of the convention on the first day to watch the Grey Cup, angered many of the delegates who had expected more of an action orientation from the Pilkey leadership.

On the Quebec discussion for example, many delegates were at the microphones and it looked like the discussion would be thorough. But with people like CUPE national staffer Keely Cummings up to speak, Pilkey cut off the debate, perhaps afraid that Cummings might express the national CUPE convention position in support of Quebec self-determination.

Would the leadership have been able to push through their pet resolutions without this heavy-handed interference? No doubt—at least on some questions. Their methods won them opponents, though, even among some of their supporters. One reason for this was the generally serious mood that some delegates noted as a change from past conventions.

One of the most significant fights was for the creation of a women's committee of the OFL. It is remarkable how many women from different locals organized to fight for the resolution proposing this committee. The leadership succeeded in keeping the resolution from coming to the floor, but it certainly didn't succeed in intimidating women delegates who fought for the committee.

It was on the last day when many of the more conservative delegates had left, leaving about 400 on the floor, that the leadership had its hardest moments. Over the leadership's protests the delegates voted for a mass campaign to win nationalization of the nickel industry. An anti-tripartism resolution passed with little discussion. And a resolution demanding 24-hour child-care was adopted.

Until this mini-uprising the convention had been similar to past conventions in many ways, remaining within the business-as-usual approach of the leadership. But the discussions on Quebec, women, Inco nationalization, and unemployment indicated some of the political thinking going on in the unions. A lot of unionists are more critical now of the lack of leadership from the OFL. They want more of a fight-back strategy. This approach will probably be reflected in the Canadian Labor Congress convention next spring.

editorial

Defend Quebec self-determination

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But the PQ government has pursued blatantly pro-capitalist policies, and some of the illusions are beginning to wear off. Union leaders are starting to come under pressure to fight back against PQ attacks.

When the so-called antiscab Bill 45 took shape as a further step toward government interference in the unions, the Quebec Teachers Federation and the Confederation of National Trade Unions took to the streets. Between 5,000 and 10,000 rallied December 16 in the first antigovernment action by labor since the PQ was elected.

Economy in shambles

The Canadian dollar was a fairly accurate economic barometer in 1977, falling more than 10 percent relative to the U.S. dollar, and as much as 30 percent relative to other imperialist currencies.

The declining dollar reflected a range of woes: increasing pressure of international competition, accelerating inflation, and a stagnating economy—the index of industrial production has not budged since last January.

The ruling class has no answer to this dilemma except to continue its assault on workers living standards, an offensive that dealt hard blows to the labor movement in 1977.

The army of jobless continues to grow. Ottawa now estimates unemployment at 8.4 percent; the real total is well over a million unemployed. Massive layoffs have been imposed, even in union strongholds like Inco, without significant resistance. Wage increases have been cut to the bone.

Wage controls and unemployment shackled labor's capacity to fight back. And the labor leadership only made matters worse.

After the success of the October 14, 1976 general strike against wage controls, CLC leaders turned their backs on the ranks, seeking instead to negotiate a "tripartite" agreement with Ottawa. Capitalist intransigence forced them to abandon negotiations in August, but they have yet to produce an alternative plan for action.

No wonder unionists felt disarmed in 1977. Strikes in the first nine months of the year were only 30 percent of the 1976 level.

Nor did the struggle for NDP governments make any headway in 1977; the NDP suffered electoral setbacks in Ontario and Manitoba.

A new course for 1978

But there are grounds for optimism for the coming year. Many unionists are now looking for a plan of action to provide a more effective defense against capitalist attacks.

Tripartism has been debated and voted down by several labor conventions, including the B.C., Saskatchewan, and Ontario federations, and CUPE.

Strong criticism of the NDP's right-wing course was heard at the 1977 conventions of the Saskatchewan federation and CUPW—a promising sign.

And there were advances on other fronts. The past year saw an encouraging upturn in the women's liberation movement (see page 12).

Actions for the rights of immigrants, gays, students, and Native people show areas where massive struggles may develop.

"Don't get caught"

And this was the year when the Mounties were exposed: burning a barn, stealing files, breaking into the PQ headquarters, planting informers in labor and socialist organizations—a pattern of systematic violations of basic civil rights.

An unofficial spokesman for the RCMP, W. Kelly, explained the motto of this campaign: "The idea is not to get caught."

They can be caught—but not by the McDonald and Keable commissions. What's needed is a campaign by labor and left organizations for freedom of speech and association, and against police disruption.

A new voice

There's no question why *Socialist Voice* supporters will remember 1977. Our paper was born this year, together with its sister paper *Lutte Ouvriere*, uniting forces that had previously published five different newspapers.

A parallel process brought together three different groups to form the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvriere Revolutionnaire, the unified section of the Trotskyist Fourth International in the Canadian state.

Revolutionary Marxists remain a small handful in Canada and Quebec today. But the success of the RWL/LOR fusion indicates that they have bright prospects in the period of intensive political crisis now opening in Canada and Quebec.

letters

The letters column is an open forum on topics of interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if your name may be used or if you prefer that initials be used instead.

Quid pro quo, remember

Frank Rooney has a good point (Editor's Corner, December 12) when he notes that papers "lifting" material from *Socialist Voice* should credit the source. He might have mentioned that the Saskatchewan NDP's *Commonwealth*, in reprinting part of the Voice's transcript of "The Fifth Estate" expose of the RCMP, didn't take the trouble to indicate where it had obtained the transcript.

But surely the same considerations apply to *Socialist Voice*, too. For example, you failed to credit that excellent cartoon that accompanied the article on RCMP "dirty tricks" in the November 28 issue.

The cartoon was borrowed from *CUPE Journal*, the newspaper of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. CUPE stands out as one of the few unions that has attempted to make an issue of RCMP disruption in the labor movement; it is to be hoped that its leaders, editors, and cartoonists will continue to speak out against police harassment.

Richard Fidler
Toronto

Defend arrested 'Snuff' protesters

Your article "But *Snuff* ban no answer" in the November 28 *Socialist Voice* helped to clarify certain issues concerning censorship and pornography currently being debated among feminists and the revolutionary left across Canada.

I agree that campaigns against violence against women should be concerned with the general demands put forward in the article: "funding of rape crisis centers; an end to harassment of gays, lesbians, and prostitutes; and changes in legal procedures which currently treat rape victims as the criminals."

But it is also important, given the particular situation in Toronto, to include as one of the demands: "Drop the charges against those arrested on November 5." Even if we may not agree with the tactic of attempting to stop the film *Snuff*, nevertheless it is important for socialists and the labor movement to defend militants in the women's movement against police brutality and state repression.

C.G.
Toronto

A voice to cry out against injustice

There is talk of a union of unemployed in the St. Catharines area in line with plans formulated provincially by the labor federation. I qualify for membership in this group and will get active if I'm in town long enough. There are also local issues, but a socialist organization would have to be much bigger to take advantage of these opportunities.

I have been busy visiting and writing forms in search of work. The job seems to be endless, without much free time afforded to do political work. In these circumstances, I appreciate the value of organized activities in the public arena specifically designed to promote the cause of socialism.

I've been away looking for work. One issue of the new publication, *Socialist Voice*, got to me before I left. I like the paper. The new seems to have carried on many of the strong points of the old. There seems to be an infusion of new talent in the writing and editing of the press.

The name of the paper is good, too, in my opinion. A voice is intended to cry out against injustice, break the silence of apathy, and persuade people to use their resources and talents to build a rational world out of the present mess: a better society that operates on the basis that everyone's material needs are met. This goal can only be met when each has control over immediate lifestyle and a free chance to influence the course of political decisions.

Roger Harper
St. Catharines

Tax rebates build 'Socialist Voice'

By Beverly Bernardo

When hard times hit, it doesn't affect everybody equally. The rich worry about investments and their profit margins, but they don't feel the pinch in everyday living the way the rest of us do. In a nutshell, that's what's behind Trudeau's regal, arrogant unconcern for the jobless.

But corporations and their governments must make some effort to convince working people they really are trying to solve the problems unemployment brings. On December 13, Parliament passed a bill providing tax deductions of up to $100 for the first two months of 1978 for 7.5 million Canadians. Pay packets for most workers will be up to $50 greater than usual in January and February. Ottawa is encouraging workers to spend this "bonus" to help boost the economy.

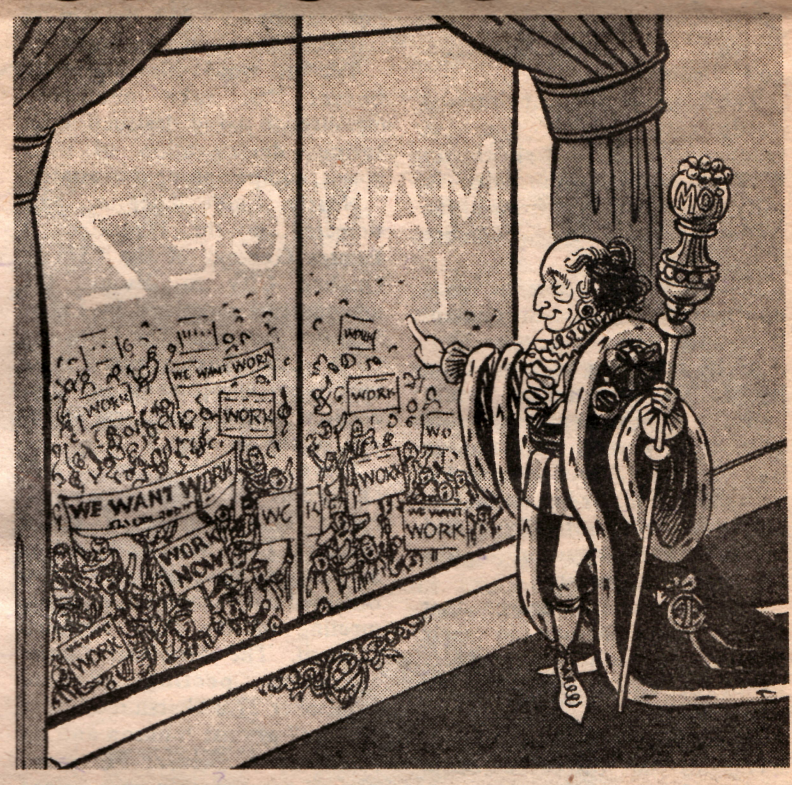
It's hard to get excited about this latest federal government gimmick. Chretien's $100 tax break won't buy very much these days. It will do nothing to solve unemployment.

But *Socialist Voice* has a proposal.

Let's use the money to help rid society of unemployment and all the problems capitalism breeds. If our readers contribute their tax rebates for January and February, it would help *Socialist Voice* immensely.

We need that money, not just to keep up with capitalist inflation but to expand and improve the revolutionary press.

Socialist Voice is still a new paper—its predecessors were the *Militant*, *Labor Challenge*, and the *Young Socialist*. In our first issue we stated our aim was to be the voice of all the movements against exploitation and oppression. We were convinced that our unified efforts would make *Socialist Voice* different and more effective than any of its predecessors.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Defeat chauvinist unity drive: defend Quebec's rights

By Richard Fidler

The following is the introductory section of a speech entitled "Quebec's language law under attack: Scope and limits of the Parti Quebecois strategy," which was presented at a public forum of the Revolutionary Workers League in Toronto last October.

It has been slightly edited and updated for publication in Socialist Voice.

Since the election of the Parti Quebecois government just over a year ago, the Quebec national question has dominated political life in Canada.

How could it be otherwise? With a government in Quebec City pledged to fight for the political independence of a nation encompassing more than one quarter of Canada's population, the continued existence of the Canadian state itself has been put in question.

Underlying the startling result of the November 15 election in Quebec was the mounting struggle of six million Quebecois for national liberation.

Virtually all Quebecois are profoundly dissatisfied with their present status in the Canadian Confederation. All of them want fundamental changes. Many still hope such changes can be accomodated within some form of federal system, although a large and growing minority identify their liberation with the formation of a new, independent Quebec state.

A much smaller minority of Quebecois understand that to achieve real independence for Quebec, radical social changes are also necessary—a break with imperialism, and the creation of a new, socialist society. The logic of the liberation struggle as it develops, however, is to increasingly pose the underlying social issues and the need to break with capitalist rule, the source of Quebec's national oppression.

The capitalist rulers of Canada have not been slow to respond to this challenge.

Overcoming their initial shock at the PQ victory, the opponents of Quebec's self-determination rallied their forces. Their offensive has taken shape over the past year.

It is a complicated strategy encompassing a combination of tactics, ranging from subtle manipulation of public opinion polls to outright blackmail of the Quebecois and threats to use armed force to thwart their independence.

There have been repeated threats by government ministers that they will challenge or disallow Quebec legislation; the initiation of a purge of "separatists" in Radio Canada, the French-language arm of the CBC; and confrontations with Quebec in areas of disputed federal-provincial jurisdiction such as cable TV, immigration, and now policing and the courts.

Trudeau has flatly stated he will not recognize the results of the Quebec referendum if it goes against staying in Canada. The federal Liberal parliamentary caucus has discussed the use of "Chilean-style destabilization" tactics against the Quebec government.

Francophones throughout Canada have been blackmailed with the federal offer of a trade-off of language rights for the French-speaking minorities outside Quebec in return for concessions to the privileged English-speaking minority in Quebec.

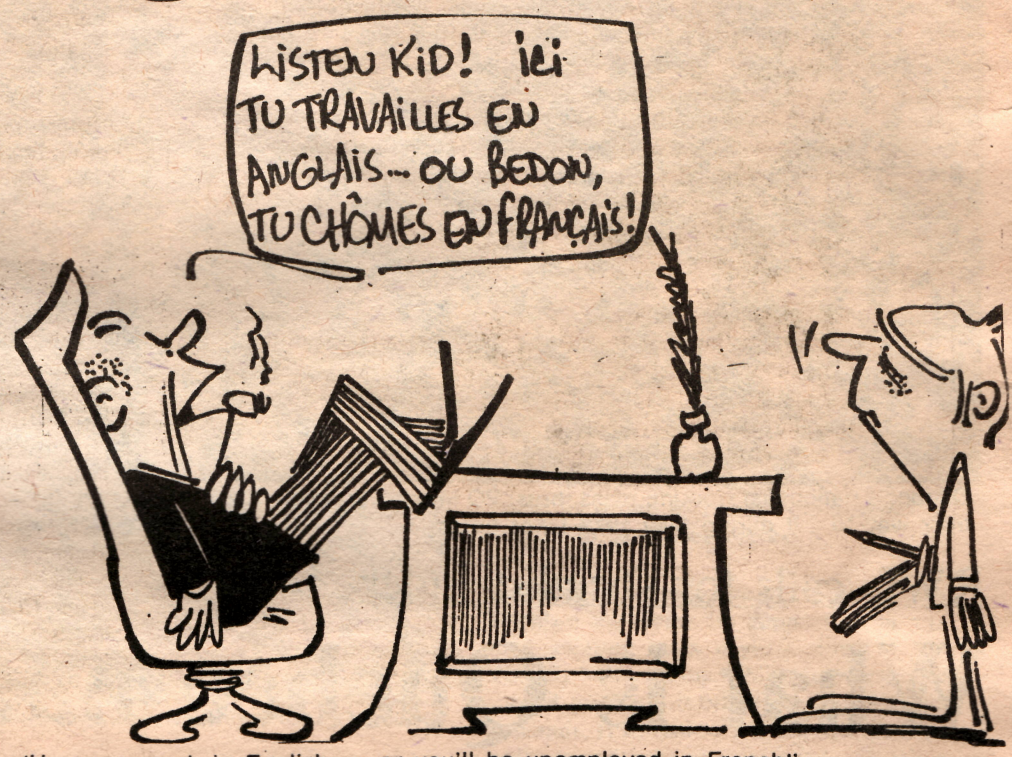
Big business and government have teamed up to issue repeated warnings of economic sabotage if Quebec separates—threats underscored by highly publicized evidence of the beginning of a "flight of capital" from this politically unstable province. Ontario Premier William Davis has rejected outright the PQ's proposals for economic association between a sovereign Quebec and Ontario.

The capitalist mass media have faithfully orchestrated this campaign.

The immediate objective of the federalist offensive is to whip up anglophone chauvinist reaction against Quebec, to intimidate the Quebecois, and to pressure the PQ into making major concessions. A longer-term aim is to fashion a base for a reactionary coalition of forces in Quebec and Canada as a whole that can be used to block the advance of the independence movement, turn it back, and defeat it.

The military occupation of Quebec in October 1970 and the current revelations of RCMP "dirty tricks" against Quebec nationalists, the unions, and radical political groupings, indicate the kind of tactics Ottawa is prepared to use—and is already using—to block Quebec's independence.

The scope of the attack on Quebec today is unprecedented. The Social Democrats and liberals have joined in, and in some cases themselves taken the lead. The



'Here you work in English . . . or you'll be unemployed in French!'

Ottawa leads offensive

The Trudeau government is leading the offensive. In recent months, it has unleashed a barrage of propaganda intended to intimidate the Quebecois and to mobilize anglophone opposition to their self-determination.

liberal nationalists of English Canada, in the pages of *Canadian Forum* and similar publications, issue dire warnings about the threat to English Canada if Quebec leaves Confederation.

Saskatchewan NDP Premier Allan Blakeney, in his recent speech to the Canadian Bar Association, hinted darkly at a possible recourse to armed force against Quebec, and refused to dissociate himself from such threats. The entire NDP leadership, instead of defending Quebec against the mounting attack on its rights, have made a vocation of offering advice to Canada's rulers on how to "keep Canada united."

Forging a chauvinist coalition

Some recent developments—such as the controversy over the Quebec government's language legislation—must be viewed in the context of this massive offensive. Law 101, the first major piece of legislation to be adopted by the Parti Quebecois government, has been from the outset a prime target for the federalists.

Their campaign, which challenges the very right of Quebec to adopt its own language policy, is a test for all those in the workers movement and elsewhere who claim to defend Quebec's right to self-determination.

The bill actually differs very little in its detailed provisions from Bill 22 of the Bourassa Liberal government. The major differences lie in the nationalist rhetoric of its preamble and of the white paper that accompanied the new bill.

But immediately upon its adoption by the National Assembly in late August, Law 101 faced a number of legal challenges to its constitutionality. Corporations pleaded exemption from its very modest provisions. The most direct challenge to date was issued in September with the open defiance of the legislation by English Protestant school boards in the Montreal area. The boards illegally enrolled at least 1,500 pupils in English schools, and launched a court challenge to the law.

Prime Minister Trudeau promptly stated that he "respects" those who are defying the law. And a few weeks later his government announced that it would intervene on behalf of all those who challenged the law before the courts.

This statement was immediately endorsed by federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, who said Trudeau's stand was the same as the NDP's.

The English-Canadian media presented Trudeau's statement as a retreat by Ottawa from earlier suggestions that it might disallow the Quebec law unilaterally, as it can do under the Canadian constitution. But far from marking a retreat, Ottawa's response clarifies a key element of its current strategy. In the Trudeau government's view, federal disallowance of the law would simply make the relationship of forces too obvious, convincing many more Quebecois that the central government stands as an obstacle to even modest legislative attempts to improve their conditions. And they might draw the obvious conclusions.

On the other hand, a direct court challenge of the law by Ottawa might fare little better; constitutional experts say that apart from provisions of Law 101 that deal with the language of the courts and legislature, the law is probably within Quebec's powers, even under the existing constitutional set-up.

Ottawa's main concern is to use the opposition to the law among Quebec's anglophone and immigrant population to help forge a coalition of reactionary forces that can be maneuvered against the Quebec independence struggle as a whole.

An English enclave?

By encouraging these elements to mobilize in their own name, the federalist opponents of Quebec hope to create a powerful striking force that can polarize the English-speaking community as a whole, together with a large section of the substantial immigrant community and significant layers of the French-speaking Quebecois, against the independentists and their allies in the francophone population.

In much the same way that British imperialism fostered the creation of a Protestant enclave in Northern Ireland in order to preserve direct control over an area of Ireland, the capitalist rulers of Canada may hope to polarize a non-francophone community in Quebec that can be used, not only to combat the Quebec independence movement in its own name, but to provide a rationale for armed federal intervention—and even the formation of some rump Canadian statelet in western Quebec—at some future date.

Challenge for 1978

Ottawa is thus moving on two fronts. In English Canada, it hopes to forge a monolith of chauvinist opposition to Quebec rights. Inside Quebec, it is promoting a militant bloc of right-wing forces in defense of English-language privilege and of federal domination.

If Ottawa achieves these goals, it will greatly reinforce capitalist rule not only over Quebec, but over the English-Canadian labor movement and all the oppressed.

English-Canadian labor can block this campaign. It has a life-and-death interest in doing so. Defense of Quebec's right to self-determination will be a decisive task for labor and its allies in 1978.

Quebec's nationalist working class thrust PQ into government. Above, leaders of three trade-union federations on their way to jail during May 1972 labor upsurge.

RWL calls for socialist independence

What is Quebec nationalism?

By Yves Desjardins

The following article is taken from a report by Yves Desjardins to the August 1977 convention of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.).

Desjardins brought greetings to the SWP from the then newly-formed Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvriere Revolutionnaire (RWL). He is a member of the RWL's Central Committee.

The national oppression of the Quebecois is one of the most solid foundations of Canadian confederation.

Quebec is a nation. It has a common language, its own history, national institutions, as well as a high level of national consciousness, whose clearest expression is the rise of a powerful nationalist movement since the beginning of the 1960s.

Quebec has a highly contradictory character. While it is heavily industrialized, it is also a nation completely dominated by foreign imperialism. In contrast to the classical advanced countries, Quebec has never had a victorious bourgeois revolution. Never in its history has Quebec had a bourgeois state dominated by an indigenous bourgeoisie.

As a result of Quebec's domination by imperialism, it suffers from a series of structural deformations: the absence of a national bourgeoisie worthy of the name, a structural weakness in its heavy manufacturing sector, and excessive development of the public services sector and the construction industry, a very heavy dependence on foreign investments, and a superexploitation of Quebec workers within the North American continent.

National oppression

On the cultural and linguistic level, the Quebecois suffer profound discrimination. English, the language of a privileged minority, is the vehicle of social advancement. Quebecois workers are among the linguistic groups which are the lowest-paid inside Quebec itself. Throughout history, the Canadian ruling class has tried to assimilate the Quebec nation.

But the attempt to assimilate the Quebecois has been a total failure. Despite the pressures towards cultural assimilation, 80 percent of Quebec's population of 6 million remains French-speaking. Through the years, French-speaking Quebecois have won some concessions from Ottawa . . . [including] increased powers to Quebec's provincial government.

Yet most Quebecois do not identify with the Canadian federal state, and support moves for increased national rights. A large proportion now have concluded that these rights cannot be won short of independence.

Long considered as one of the most backward regions in Canada, Quebec industrialized later than most areas in North America. But with the beginning of the 1960s, the Quebec working class took giant leaps forward, which today puts it in the vanguard of struggles across the entire continent.

For a series of reasons, the youth radicalization hit Quebec toward the end of the 1960s. It rapidly took the form of radical nationalism, directed particularly against the language oppression the Quebecois suffer. In 1969, Quebec saw mass demonstrations of unprecedented scope.

They demanded that French be established as the language of work—that is, that all French-speaking Quebecois have an equal chance to get a job as those who speak English. They demanded that French be established as the sole language of instruction in the school system. . . .

Quebec labor in vanguard

The demand for political independence began to gain a mass appeal in the late 1960s. However, the creation of the Parti Quebecois (PQ) in 1969 co-opted most of this radicalization on the electoral level. Nevertheless, from 1971 on, the trade-union movement, which had gotten much stronger during the previous years, came to the political forefront and the center of the radicalization.

The struggles of labor have become more consciously political as unions moved into action against the former Liberal government. Labor struggles have not absorbed or suspended the other expressions of the class struggle. The movement against national oppression has continued to grow, as shown by the PQ's election victory.

The student movement remains combative, fighting against budget cuts; the poor farmers and women also continue their struggles. Moreover, particularly following the overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile in 1973, the Quebec working class has begun to develop an internationalist consciousness.

"Solidarity—to free ourselves from boss and capitalist exploitation," reads slogan at Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN).

This entire rise of struggles and social tensions is reflected in a deformed way by the victory of the PQ. That is why it is absolutely vital for revolutionaries to express a clear position on the national question.

We are internationalists. It is precisely that understanding which leads us to struggle against any oppression of one nation by another and to struggle unconditionally for the right of self-determination of the oppressed nation.

That is one of the most fundamental lessons of Leninism. But we also support the call for the independence of Quebec.

We do not always call for secession of the oppressed nation. This is a question of concrete analysis of a concrete situation. In Quebec, we note that the struggle for national independence has become the concrete form of the struggle for self-determination. Almost everyone who fights for national rights supports independence. That is why the Trotskyists support the call for independence and participate in the struggle to win it.

Contradictory character

In the case of Quebec, our analysis begins with the understanding of the contradictory phenomenon that develops out of national oppression. On the one hand, nationalist ideology, the solidarity of the entire nation, between social classes, has allowed the petty bourgeoisie of the PQ to win the support of the masses and to block the independent organizations of the working class.

But on the other hand, this nationalism expresses in a spontaneous way the elementary form of the revolt of the masses against their oppression. That is, as Trotsky said, that this nationalism is "the shell of their social indignation."

Our key strategic task is thus to give a class content to the revolt of the masses against their national oppression. In Quebec our entire experience shows that to win the working masses away from the influence of bourgeois nationalism, revolutionists must take up the national question and link it to the struggle for socialism.

We will convince workers that in the face of the continual betrayals of the PQ, only they can carry through to the end the tasks of national liberation, in the framework of the struggle for a workers state. This is the only way to win them away from bourgeois nationalism.

Our analysis of Quebec leads us to the conclusion that even a bourgeois independence would be a very heavy blow against the Canadian ruling class. It would provoke an unprecedented political crisis. It would weaken the Canadian ruling class politically and economically, creating more favorable conditions for the class struggle in English Canada.

We defend the right of Quebec to independence in any form, including an independence under the leadership of bourgeois forces. The independence of Quebec weakens Canadian imperialism. Moreover, our unconditional support for independence will allow us to win the masses away from the influence of the PQ.

In the same way, we defend any progressive measure that the PQ might be forced to carry out. For example, we oppose all attempts by the federal government to interfere with the right of the Quebec government to pass legislation on the language question. But we do not in any way support this party or its government.

Socialist independence

Our unconditional support for Quebec's right to independence does not signify that we advance only national demands. Real national liberation, removing Quebec from imperialist domination, is impossible under capitalism. So we closely link national demands to transitional anticapitalist demands. We combine the perspective of an independent Quebec with that of a socialist Quebec.

Real national liberation requires the massive expropriation of imperialist interests, breaking the ties of the Quebec economy with the world imperialist market, and the establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade together with socialist planning of an economy run by workers councils. Only a revolutionary mobilization of the masses which goes beyond the bourgeois-nationalist objectives of the PQ can achieve such a task.

This is the perspective of the socialist independence of Quebec, the Quebec workers republic. Linked to a strategy of the mobilization of the working class outside Quebec in support of the struggle of the Quebecois, and on the basis of common demands, these tasks converge towards their central common objective which is the destruction of the Canadian imperialist state.

Conference

MONTREAL—The election of the Parti Quebecois government on November 15, 1976 showed a profound desire for change among the working masses of Quebec. A year later it is time for a balance sheet.

The goal of independence is mired in the quicksands of the referendum. A growing number of workers, women, and students are learning that the Parti Quebecois (PQ) cannot meet their aspirations.

The workers of the Wayagamack paper mill in Trois Rivieres tore up their PQ membership cards when PQ minister Berube confirmed the shutdown of their factory. Thousands of hospital workers are struggling against budget cuts more severe than those of the former Bourassa government.

Education Minister Jacques-Yvan Morin told hundreds of students who were involved in a struggle against university fees that abolition of tuition fees was a long way off.

The PQ leadership has refused to implement the decision of the PQ convention for free abortion on demand. Gays are learning that the fine speeches of some PQ figures for gay rights are now a thing of the past. Little by little, disillusion is spreading.

But in the absence of a credible alternative this can quickly lead to a feeling of

How PQ betrays hopes of the Quebecois

to plan fight for labor party

By Ginette Lewis

Almost 300 people attended a Montreal meeting jointly organized by the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and the Quebec Socialist Workers Group (GSTQ) November 25. The large turnout, despite a transit strike and a snowstorm, indicated the growing interest in the need for an alternative to the Parti Quebecois.

The meeting was an example of the growing political agreement and collaboration between the two organizations. It provided a glimpse of the potential weight of a unified Trotskyist organization, something the RWL is seeking through stepped-up collaboration and discussion with the GSTQ.

Ginette Lewis, a Quebec City hospital union militant, spoke for the RWL, while Pierre Lemaire, a member of the Montreal Teachers Alliance, spoke for the GSTQ. Arthur Young gave greetings on behalf of the English-Canadian wing of the RWL.

The following are extracts from Lewis's speech at the Montreal rally.

Welcoming Levesque home from recent Paris trip. Sign reads, "Rene, the greatest of them all."

MONTREAL—It is already more than a year since the Parti Quebecois took power in Quebec. This victory has created an immense expectation of change among the masses.

For the bourgeoisie, it marked the opening of a period of deep crisis. With even the existence of Canada itself in question, it is hardly astonishing that the bourgeoisie should consider all possible solutions ranging from military intervention to a Chilean-style economic destabilization.

Initially, the bourgeoisie has opted for a flexible tactic aimed at winning Quebec to a federalist perspective at the time of the referendum.

Trudeau's Liberals have tried to rally the support of the whole English-Canadian population around the theme: "it is necessary to block the separation of Quebec at all costs; the break-up of Canada would be a crime against humanity." A vast unity campaign was launched designed to create a massive reactionary alliance to give Trudeau the power to intervene by any means he considers necessary.

What has the PQ done in face of this intransigence? It shuffles; it bows; it waters down its goals. However, in spite of the persistent and eager wooing by the PQ, no sector of the bourgeoisie has taken notice or shown any gratitude. Both American imperialism and the Canadian ruling class are unanimously opposed to Quebec separation.

The October 1970 war measures were not an accident. That is shown by the revelations of the illegal activity of the RCMP and the Canadian army since 1970. The Canadian bourgeoisie keeps a big stick in reserve in case it does not succeed in "persuading" us to accept the federal regime by intimidation and blackmail.

Today the questionable actions of the RCMP are making headlines. It seems an ideal time for the PQ and the workers movement to fight back, demanding that the real terrorists, the RCMP and the Canadian army, be expelled from Quebec.

But no. The PQ itself does not want light shed on the behavior of the government, police, and army at the time of the war measures. The PQ does not want to discredit the police which it will send to quell Quebecois strikers.

At a time when the only strategy which can defeat the offensive of the Canadian ruling class is the consistent mobilization of the Quebecois masses, the strategy of the PQ is just the opposite: to negotiate with the Canadian authorities and preach social peace to the masses.

The PQ took power when the Canadian bourgeoisie was launching a general offensive against the working class. The PQ is complicit in this offensive; its first budget was an austerity budget designed "to ease the concerns existing in the business community."

The PQ has proved powerless to stop the deterioration of the economic situation. In the next four months it will spend $65 million to create between 3,500 and 7,000 jobs at a time when there are 400,000 unemployed in Quebec. What a sinister farce.

In the hospital sector where I work the drive for capitalist rationalization means staff cuts, layoffs, closing of departments, and an increase in the workload and in the use of part-time staff. Everywhere there are cutbacks, and health minister Lazure calls this the humanization of health. More and more militants understand the necessity of an organized and unified response of workers in the health sector.

In the educational sector, in spite of its promises, the PQ leadership has no intention of attacking the private schools. At the junior college level, the PQ wishes to reinforce the weight of the bosses in controlling courses and attacking all those who develop critical ideas. As for the university reform, it's the same story: adjust higher education to the need of the capitalist market.

The policies of the PQ also attack women. Levesque rejected a resolution adopted by the last PQ convention calling for free abortion on demand.

The situation of women is worsening. The gap between women's and men's wages is widening. Childcare has not been made more available and the PQ policy tends to pressure women to return to the home in order to reduce the number of women in the labor market.

Any effective response to the bosses' offensive must draw its support from the only existing mass organizations of the workers—the unions. This union response should not limit itself to solely economic demands. It should also challenge the PQ's policies and pose the necessity of a labor party.

United and consistent mobilization is necessary to win our demands. This means a break with the present policies of the union leaders who wish to limit our action to the role of pressure on the PQ. This policy can only bring disaster upon disaster to the workers. We must fight for a new strategy, a strategy of class struggle, of independent workers' political action, for a workers party based on the unions.

The union bureaucrats want to suppress all serious debate on independence and the labor party. That is why the struggle for the labor party is linked to the fight for workers democracy.

Furthermore, a labor party must pose the unity of the workers and the unemployed.

A labor party based on the unions must also struggle against the oppression and superexploitation of women and gays.

We need a labor party that will struggle against imperialism for the independence of Quebec and for socialism. This requires a common struggle with the workers of English Canada for the destruction of the federal state which oppresses us all. This alliance must be based on respect for our right to self-determination.

This meeting has been jointly organized by the RWL and the GSTQ to advance the debate on the necessity of two objectives which we share: the struggle for the independence of Quebec and the fight for a workers party based on the trade unions.

Moreover, this meeting is a living example of the growing collaboration between the GSTQ and the RWL, a living example of the possibilities for common work between revolutionary forces in Quebec.

—translated from Lutte Ouvriere

isolation and powerlessness. The crisis of capitalism deepens, and the living conditions of the masses continue to deteriorate. Of course in some places there are defensive struggles. But a unified response by the entire working class and its allies is becoming more and more urgent, if the attacks of the capitalists are to be turned back.

The unions are the only mass organizations of the working class today. They are the sole rallying point where all workers can come together to work out political perspectives and struggle for defined goals.

But the unions in themselves are not enough. And you cannot separate union questions on the one hand and political questions on the other, the way the union leaders do. Any united response by the unions will only run into the opposition of the PQ and federal governments. We must struggle not only on the union level, but above all at the political level.

The union leaderships offer no political perspectives other than under-the-table support to the Parti Quebecois. The workers have no mass political organization for their struggle against the capitalist class.

Nor is it enough to proclaim the revolutionary alternative to the Parti Quebecois. For even the best program cannot become a real force until it has been taken up by the masses. That's why it's urgent to struggle for a mass workers party based on the trade union movement. This party must arm itself with a program of mass action leading towards independence and socialism—a workers republic of Quebec.

Certainly this course will run into major obstacles. First, the union leaders support the PQ directly or indirectly. Instead of assuming their responsibilities to the working class, they block the formation of a labor party.

Second, many workers still have illusions about the PQ. They need to have more experience with the policies of this party, and above all see a concrete alternative to the PQ take shape.

That's why the national conference on the labor party question planned by the Trade Union Militants Tendency (RMS) for the month of May is of special interest. It is open to everyone looking for an alternative to the PQ and the other bourgeois parties, or simply interested in the idea of a labor party.

This conference is a way for those who want to build a labor party to take stock, evaluate their forces, and engage in an initial discussion on the program for this party and for the struggle inside the unions to create it.

This perspective is an integral part of the struggle to establish a revolutionary working-class alternative to the reign of capital and its defenders including the PQ. That is why *Lutte Ouvriere* plans to contribute to building this national conference and the preparatory conferences planned by the RMS in the different regions of Quebec.

—translated from Lutte Ouvriere

M.P./Lutte Ouvriere

Joint Montreal rally of RWL and GSTQ called for labor party and for Quebec independence.

Christmas: a discussion

Sick of oppression?

Take two candy canes and call me in the morning

By Chris O'Brien

The following article is abridged from the December 22, 1976 issue of Red Weekly, *a British revolutionary socialist newspaper.*

"Revolution is the festival of the oppressed," said Lenin many Christmases ago. Christmas, on the other hand, is the festival of oppression.

One aspect of Christmas is most obvious, and the most obnoxious. Christmas is business. One eighth of all retail trade is normally done in December. We are first warned of the festive season when the shops become filled with holly and tinsel shortly after the summer holidays. We count the time in shopping days.

Affection is shown by the amount of money you spend. Of course, Dame Anna Neagle or Richard Baker will be on the box telling you to give generously to those who will not have a merry Christmas. "If you haven't got a halfpenny, God bless you." He'd better, because no one else will.

Selling at Christmas is so easy that advertising reverts from its usual polished sophistication. Everything which goes to make up Christmas costs money, which is a happy coincidence if you happen to be a capitalist.

The family, the monarch, and God

There is one exception, though. Where would Christmas be without the family? "The family that plays together, stays together," says an advertisement selling us records. It's true, of course. Childhood family relations are re-established for a few days and any attempt to escape the stifling atmosphere of the Christmas dinner can only be met with recriminations and individual guilt.

The real star at the top of the Christmas tree is the monarch. The Queen unites the Commonwealth round their television sets at 3:00 in the afternoon to tell us how good it is to be British and bad luck if you're not. "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." And then there's the "King of Kings," the one it's all about. It might seem strange, in the midst of the orgy of consumption, that "He" is even worth a mention. But the real question is not *how* the capitalists use Christmas to sell.

What distinguishes Christmas is its unity. Everyone in the country is supposedly doing the same thing at the same time. But despite this apparent unity, there is no *solidarity.* The perfect image is Good King Wenceslas on an Oxfam Christmas card. The Bohemian overlord helping out the local peasants is repeated in the conscience-salving handouts of the affluent.

The invention of Christmas

Christmas, contrary to what the TV bishops may say, never began as a religious festival in the ideological sense.

Christ was supposedly born on December 25, which is quite a feat of Biblical scholarship when you consider the mystery which surrounds the rest of his life. In fact censuses in the Roman Empire were held in the summer, when it was easier to travel, and there was no census in the year zero—which is enough to melt the snow off your Christmas cards.

In fact Christmas was a recruiting stunt of the Christian Church in the 4th century. There had long been winter festivals in most religions. These centered around the winter solstice of December 22 when the days started to get longer. The Romans had their Saturnalia, a week of feasting and dancing, around this time. In Northern Europe Yuletide, with its rich food, celebrated fertility rites. The significance of the solstice for sun-worshippers is obvious—the rebirth of their savior.

When Christmas was invented, Christianity was in competition with just such a sun-cult—Mithraism. The Church shamelessly adopted the sun-worshipers' festival as a way of winning the support of the followers of Mithras. Christ neatly occupied the spot previously reserved for the sun as savior. Symbols such as the halo—the sun of divinity—were adopted, while the manger is a straight crib from the cult of Adonis, who was also supposed to have been born in a stable.

Many other symbols were added over the years, all of which are now supposed to be bound up with the Christmas tradition.

The central figures, however, remain the mother and child. It is this which gives Christmas its ideological power. The Virgin Mary, too, is hardly a Biblical figure. Her elevation was the result of another sectarian struggle of the early Church, this time against the Gnostic Christians who denied the bodily existence of Jesus. After the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, she became the symbol of Rome triumphant, and still later of the militant Church of the counterreformation.

Mary's family role

The present symbolism of the Virgin dates from the period of the emergent bourgeoisie: the 15th century. Previously the worship of Mary had been bound up with the idea of courtly love, with the woman as divine and unobtainable. Now she became a more earthly, and ideologically useful, mother figure *within the family.*

Mary's significance lies not just in her obvious pliability and submissiveness (to God, angels, Joseph, and so on), but also in her family role. She is mother who combines perfect care and attention with a complete lack of sexual personality. The Virgin Mary will be in every household at Christmas—cooking dinner.

Peace and goodwill to all men. Not to the Virgin in the kitchen, nor to the millions of people who are without the dubious benefit of a family. Suicide rates shoot up at Christmas and emergency phone-ins find their lines jammed.

But class contradictions come to happy end for a few days in late December.

Liberating potential?

Is there really a "liberating potential" in the annual festival of superstition and the irrational? Of course, there is an obvious sense in which Christmas represents a few days of freedom from the alienating routine of the factory. But that only applies to one half the population anyway.

No one objects to people enjoying themselves by stuffing themselves stupid or drinking themselves under the table. The real point is that Christmas *institutionalizes* all these pleasant experiences and *obscures* the oppression which it cannot help us to overcome. "Next year all our troubles will be far away."

If you spent a few days of gluttony and conspicuous consumption in, say, October, you are either a member of the bourgeoisie or an antisocial misfit. The Christmas rituals of pleasure are only acceptable because they are precisely that—rituals.

And if you dare to suggest that Christmas is not so marvelous when you are a political prisoner, or on the dole, or in sub-human living conditions—well you just won't be invited to the party.

You can't escape it; why not revel in it?

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality."—Che Guevara

By Ian Angus

I have friends who are absolutely appalled by Christmas. They spend the entire last part of the year trying to avoid it. Of course they don't succeed.

Christmas is an inescapable fact of life in this country in December. No matter how you try to get away, you are bombarded on all sides by propaganda for the Christmas spirit.

The messages vary. The stores want us all to go into debt in order to prove our love for our families and friends. For them, the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of spending.

The churches (and occasionally an editorial writer who feels guilty about his paper's advertising revenue) put forward a different message. They want us to remember "the real meaning of Christmas," which purports to be the story of the Christ child in Bethlehem, and the beginning of a religion that tells us to live for the next world instead of for this one. More practically, they want us all to go to church, to boost the collection.

Carols on the radio, in the streets, on the muzak in the offices and plants; endless Christmas specials on television; plays and movies with saccharine-sweet messages of good cheer; you cannot get away from it, it's everywhere. Say "Humbug!" all you like, you cannot escape.

It is unfashionable to say so in these times when cynicism is so widespread, but I don't try to escape Christmas. I revel in it. I put up Christmas trees and lights and ornaments, and I go to Christmas parties, and I wish everyone in sight a Merry Christmas. It is my favorite celebration.

I agree with all the criticisms you can make of Christmas as celebrated in Canada today—but they have nothing to do with the *real* meaning of Christmas, which is not the Christian mythology. The real meaning goes far back into the mists of time.

Christmas is merely the current name for a celebration that began when people first began to think. It is the celebration of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. For the people of the northern hemisphere of this planet, the winter solstice marked the end of a year, and the birth of a new year. In the dark of winter they held a celebration of human solidarity, an affirmation of life.

The Celtic peoples would sing and party all night on the longest night, and the party was marked by the coming of Father Time, the real ancestor of Father Christmas.

The Germanic peoples used evergreen trees as symbols of the winter solstice—the trees that showed life through the coldest of times.

The mythmakers of the early Christian church were quick to see the advantages of having a winter solstice celebration. They had their messiah born then as a mark of his special, supernatural character. This had the added advantage that a baby born at Christmas must have been conceived at the spring equinox, the time of planting and fertility ceremonies. They completed the cycle by having Jesus die and return to life at another spring equinox.

But those are just the Christian versions of myths that are older than history. The fact that the Christian myths are predominant in our society should not prevent humanists from celebrating the winter solstice.

Quite the contrary! The winter solstice should be marked as a humanist holiday par excellence. We should take the occasion to declare to one and all that the hucksters, whether commercial or religious or both, do not represent the traditions of this celebration, that they represent a dark period in humanity's history, a dark period that will soon be over.

Like our ancestors, we should celebrate our love for each other, and our certainty that regardless of obstacles we will survive and prosper. No matter how long the night may be, humanity will triumph!

That is the real meaning of Christmas.

Fox stonewalls Keable probe

By Beverly Bernardo

The continuation of the Keable commission's inquiry into illegal RCMP activities could do "irreparable damage" to Canadian federalism, Trudeau government lawyers argued in pressing for a halt to its proceedings.

Ottawa contends that the RCMP should have an "absolute immunity" from inquiries by any provincial body.

It's not hard to see why Trudeau wants to stop the Keable inquiry. Set up by the Parti Quebecois government to investigate illegal police activities inside Quebec, it has so far proceeded cautiously, steering clear of explosive questions like the RCMP's role in the "war measures" crisis of 1970.

But Trudeau and Fox rightly fear that the Keable inquiry cannot be as easily controlled as their hand-picked McDonald commission. The proceedings of the Keable commission could reveal facts that would undermine the authority of the federal government and strengthen the case for Quebec independence.

Revealing the truth behind the War Measures Act crisis of 1970 could shake the very foundations of Confederation. Federal troops occupied Quebec in October 1970. All civil rights were suspended, and more than 400 people were thrown in jail without charges.

The federal government has always pointed to the kidnapping of British diplomat James Cross and the abduction and subsequent murder of Pierre Laporte as the reason for this massive assault on the Quebec nationalist movement. Now, revelations such as that around Michel Viger (see box) threaten to expose RCMP involvement in the 1970 crisis.

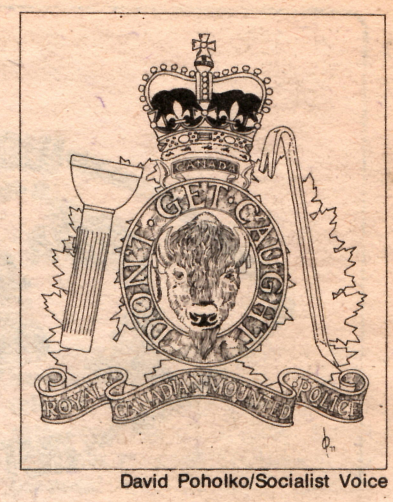
On December 16, a ruling of the Quebec Court of Appeals dealt Fox a fourth consecutive setback in his legal battle to stop the Keable inquiry.

But Fox's attempts are far from over. As things stand, his lawyers will be back in the Quebec appeal court January 16 to restate his argument that the commission is acting unconstitutionally in probing national security and the internal operation of a federal agency.

Fox has also refused to hand over certain secret RCMP documents, and to appear before the Keable commission to explain his actions.

Among the documents subpoenaed by the Keable inquiry from Fox are:

- all files used for the internal RCMP inquiry last summer that looked into allegations of illegal, presumably illegal, or unauthorized acts by the RCMP. The commission is seeking all material related to acts committed in Quebec;
- written or non-written approval given by Jean-Pierre Goyer, Solicitor-General at the time, regarding bugging of the offices of the Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec—the news agency which was broken into on October 7, 1972;
- files and documents on "disruptive tactics," the term commonly used by the CIA in the U.S. to describe methods of sowing dissension and confusion among political groups.



David Poholko/Socialist Voice

RCMP killers?

The federal government's fears that all the circumstances behind the 1970 October War Measures Act crisis may come to light lies behind its attempts to block the provincial Keable commission, said Quebec Premier Rene Levesque December 15.

Levesque told the press that he had "the impression" that as yet undisclosed and "more serious things" may be revealed as a result of the Keable inquiry.

Levesque's remarks came shortly after Social Credit MP Rene Matte's accusation that the RCMP assassinated Michel Viger, one of its alleged agents. Matte also charges that the 1970 killers of Quebec Labor Minister Pierre Laporte stayed on Viger's farm before their arrest.

Viger was subsequently imprisoned. A few months after his release, he was killed on his farm when his tractor overturned. Solicitor-General Fox says that Viger died of heat prostration after falling off his tractor, and adds that Viger's father confirms that Viger's death was accidental.

— B.B.

McDonald commission

'Whitewash job'

"If Watergate had been conducted the same way as this inquiry, Nixon would still be president." That's how David Gibbons, a Vancouver lawyer for the Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and Human Rights, summed up the functioning of the McDonald commission.

There's good reason for concern that the commission will do a whitewash job for both the RCMP and the Trudeau government.

The McDonald commission was appointed by the federal government July 6 to look into illegal RCMP activities. Its head, Alberta Supreme Court Judge David McDonald, was president of the Alberta Liberal Association in 1966-67. The impartiality of the other two commissioners is no less questionable. Guy Gilbert is a Montreal lawyer who has said he would not be averse to being a Liberal candidate; Donald Rickerd is a personal friend of Solicitor-General Francis Fox.

The McDonald commission's hearings finally began on December 6 after a five-month delay. Since then, it has been under constant attack for the way its proceedings are being conducted.

Lawyers for two civil rights groups, the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Quebec Attorney-General's department have been refused permission to cross-examine witnesses. The RCMP, Quebec police, and Solicitor-General Fox are of course permitted to participate fully.

"The McDonald Commission is in trouble," concluded *Globe and Mail* columnist Geoffrey Stevens. "It has a credibility problem."

—B.B.

RWL challenges RCMP

By Don Tapscott

EDMONTON—RCMP interference and surveillance of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) was reported on radio, television, and in the Edmonton *Journal* here December 16 and 17.

CBC radio, introducing an interview with Winnipeg RWL organizer Barry Weisleder, editorialized: "What does it mean to be subversive, or better still, potentially subversive? Did you know that your organization, whether you're campaigning, protesting, or even playing bridge, may be labelled potentially subversive on the basis that you might, in the future, perhaps three or four years from now, engage in terroristic activities?"

A number of cases of RCMP surveillance of the RWL and its founding organizations were documented by Weisleder. The RCMP was involved in the firings of members of the RWL's predecessor organizations from jobs at the Montreal Olympics in 1976 and from Flyer Industries in Winnipeg in 1974. Recently Ontario Attorney-General Roy McMurtry admitted that RCMP agents had infiltrated the Ontario Waffle, in part to keep track of the activities of "Trotskyists." Infiltration into the B.C. NDP was carried out ostensibly to look for Trotskyists at high levels in the Barrett government.

In a December 16 article entitled "Defeated candidate questioning RCMP" the Edmonton *Journal* reported that former RWL mayoral candidate Don Tapscott had written to RCMP Assistant Commissioner Wright demanding information on police surveillance of the RWL.

Coalition organizing

Repeal Law C-24

TORONTO—The following appeal for the creation of a committee to build the fight against Law C-24, the government's new immigration legislation, is being circulated here by a number of militants who were active in the Working Committee on Immigration.

Bill C-24, a racist and discriminatory immigration law, has been enacted by Parliament despite the opposition of immigrant groups trade unions, and other organizations across the country. It will become law within a few months.

Bill C-24 is a law that attacks the democratic rights of immigrants and citizens alike:

- a law that gives arbitrary powers of deportation to immigration officers without even allowing us the right to appeal;
- a law that severely restricts the right of political refugees who attempt to escape from murderous regimes, and also threatens deportation of those already here;
- a law, says Cliff Pilkey of the Ontario Federation of Labor, that will "discourage immigrants from joining the unions and thus weaken the labor movement";
- a law that divides working people along racial and ethnic lines and intimidates immigrants from exercising their political and trade-union rights.

Over the past months, opposition to the bill has developed across the country, through organizations such as Toronto's Working Committee on Immigration. This group, endorsed by 60 immigrant, labor, legal, church, student, and community organizations, built a demonstration last June of over 500 people. In November almost 2,500 gathered at City Hall, in an action called by the Action Committee Against Racism.

But despite growing opposition, the government continues to press ahead, blaming the current crisis of unemployment on immigrants rather than on this scandalous system of profit. Deportations are escalating. Recently several West Indian women were ordered deported by the immigration department. A campaign to stop these deportations is currently being organized and must be actively supported by the women's movement and progressive and labor organizations.

All of us must strengthen our efforts to build the broadest possible opposition to the government's reactionary attack. As well as defending those threatened with deportation we must continue the fight to repeal Law C-24.

The Working Committee on Immigration dissolved after the passage of the bill, but now another similar coalition is being organized to continue the struggle. We urge you to unite with us to ensure that the democratic rights of immigrants are defended.

The first meeting of the new committee will be held on January 16, starting at 8 p.m. in the International Student Center at 33 St. George Street.

Toronto postal strike wins reinstatement

By John Steele

TORONTO—Strike action by inside postal workers, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), has forced Toronto postal bosses to back down on contract violations and has won reinstatement of nine suspended union militants.

On December 6, 200 workers at the huge south central postal plant staged a sit-in to protest the use of casual workers in the mechanized section. This action forced the postal authorities to correct their violation of the collective agreement.

Management then suspended nine workers, including the local's recording secretary, chief steward, and four other stewards.

About one quarter of the local's 4,500 members attended a mass meeting December 10, and voted by a close margin in favor of strike action. The letter carriers refused to cross the CUPW picket lines, and the CUPW National Executive Board declared its support. The strike received growing support from Toronto postal workers.

Under this pressure, the post office bosses agreed December 13 to lift the suspensions, reserving their right to take disciplinary action against a number of the militants at a later date.

Red-baiting articles have now begun to appear in the Toronto big-business dailies attacking leaders of the south central walkout who are members of the Canadian Party of Labor (CPL), a small sectarian socialist organization. In the last local elections Peter Leibovitch, one of the suspended shop stewards and a member of CPL, received 37 percent of the votes in a bid for the local presidency.

Nominations for new elections take place December 29 and Leibovitch intends to run again.

The leadership and membership of CUPW will have to stand firm against this red-baiting to ensure no further disciplinary action is taken against Leibovitch or any other militants and that the elections take place without interference from the post office management.

WORLD OUTLOOK

Marroquin fights deportation

Hector Marroquin, a Mexican political activist is winning support in his fight against deportation.

Marroquin fled to the United States in April 1974 after learning Mexican police had framed him for murder and subversion. He was arrested last September on returning from Mexico where he had gone to consult a lawyer, and is now serving 90 days for illegal entry.

Marroquin has requested political asylum on the grounds that his life would be in danger if he was handed over to the Mexican authorities. Persons facing similar charges in the past have been executed, tortured, or have just disappeared.

A defense campaign conducted by the U.S. Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners has won support from prominent Native and Black activists, academics, civil libertarians, and many well-known Chicano leaders.

Greek elections reflect radicalization

The November 20 Greek elections marked a turning point. The New Democracy Party of Prime Minister Constantine Caramanlis was re-elected with a sharply reduced majority. Its vote fell to 42 percent from 54 percent in the 1974 election.

The main beneficiary was the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) led by Andreas Papandreou, which increased its share of the vote from 14 to 25 percent, and replaced the more moderate Democratic Center Union as the principle parliamentary opposition. The populist PASOK was able to use nationalist and leftist rhetoric effectively to capitalize on a growing radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie and workers.

Among the workers parties, the Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (Exterior) emerged as dominant with almost 10 percent of the vote.

Argentine junta forced to increase wages

Workers in Argentina are continuing to struggle for wage demands, despite fierce repression and the antilabor laws of the military dictatorship.

In Cordoba, after Renault workers staged a sit-in, the military intervened, killing four workers. In response, 6,000 walked out. The strike was crushed under the Industrial Security Act, which gives the government power to fire and imprison workers who dare to organize. But the strength of the walkout forced the government to grant higher wages and reinstate many fired workers.

Strikes have also engulfed many other industries. The railways were struck and so were Buenos Aires subways.

In Rosario, workers in rail, the National Grain Board, water and electrical utilities, the docks, and the government all went out.

As a result the regime has been forced to grant wage increases of 38 to 43 percent, thus punching a large hole in its austerity plans.

Solidarity with U.S. coal miners

American coal miners have gone on strike in response to the anti-union offensive of the corporations. On December 6, 130,000 miners walked out when their contract expired. They have been joined by 50,000 other members of the United Mine Workers (UMW).

The stakes are high. The coal miners will need the support of other U.S. workers. A defeat for the miners would be a significant victory for the corporations in their union-busting war.

The mine owners, including some of the world's richest companies in utilities, steel, and oil, are seeking to boost their profits by ignoring the health and safety of the miners. They are also attempting to intimidate workers to keep them from engaging in militant rank-and-file activity.

The central issues in the strike are the restoration of the miners health benefits and the right to strike locally to enforce the contract.

Last summer, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association slashed benefits that allowed workers full medical coverage—which provoked large-scale walkouts. In addition tens of thousands of miners believe the new contract must grant miners the right to strike over local grievances—many of which get bogged down in time-consuming deadend arbitration procedures. The coal operators are seeking to discipline workers by requiring a no-strike clause, bolstered with provisions penalizing miners who go on strike.

—Alan Russet

Marxist author held in E. Germany

By Don Wilson

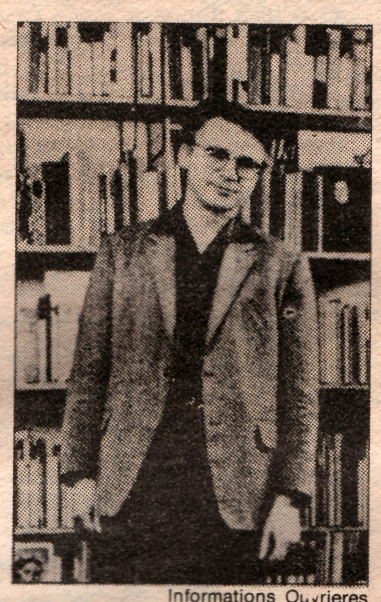
Rudolf Bahro was arrested by East German political police on espionage charges August 24. Bahro is the author of *The Alternative*, a Marxist theoretical analysis of the German Democratic Republic.

The book has been called "the most important theoretical work to come out of the countries that have abolished capitalism since Leon Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*," by Trotskyist leader Ernest Mandel, who reviewed it in the September 29 issue of *Inprecor*.

Bahro was arrested one day after giving an interview to West German television. He has since been held incommunicado.

Bahro joined the ruling Socialist Unity Party in 1952. In his West German television interview he explained: "I have long been a completely and profoundly committed Marxist and Communist. . . . I felt at the time when I asked to join the party . . . that communism offered the only framework in which the fundamental ideals which humanity has aspired to could be achieved."

A former deputy editor-in-chief of *Forum*, East Germany's leading official youth monthly, Bahro was working as department head in an East Berlin rubber-products factory before his arrest. He says the decisive event in his development came during the 1968 Czechoslovakian "Prague Spring." When Soviet-bloc tanks crushed these developments, Bahro began work on *The Alternative*.



Informations Ouvrieres

Rudolf Bahro

Bahro said that before this he had "realized that our society didn't fit in with my perspectives," that East Germany "is right now so far from communism that a real revolution is necessary to set it on the road again. I'm not talking about storming the Winter Palace, of course. I'm talking about a really far-reaching social shake-up."

Bahro's book discusses other questions vital to the struggle for socialist democracy in the Soviet bloc. For example, he proposes the "liquidation of bureaucratic corruption at the top." He continues: "If things have gone so far that the central party and state organs allow themselves residences, luxury limousines, holiday castles, and special clinics, then the only cure is to remove altogether from power the whole coterie occupying these positions.

"The political revolution will have the unconditional support of the majority of the population if it immediately decrees and carries out the following: reduction of all salaries exceeding the top limit of the normal union scale," removal of special privileges for government functionaries, and so on.

The book has serious weaknesses, Mandel points out in his review. For example, it is strongly skeptical about the potential of the working class to carry through the kind of transformation needed. But these must not obscure the power of Bahro's challenge to the bureaucracy.

Socialist organizations, trade unions, the NDP, and student organizations have a major responsibility to campaign for Bahro's immediate release, and for his democratic right to present his views openly.

The scandal of the imprisonment of this socialist critic for his ideas must be exposed. Groups like the Communist Party and the Young Communist League must be pressed to explain why East Germany joins the ranks of countries such as Chile and Iran by imprisoning Marxists.

Mao's many splendors

By Bob Smith

VANCOUVER—To hear Han Suyin tell it, Chiang Ch'ing and the "Gang of Four" would have smashed all the "capitalist" machines, started a civil war, killed all the leaders over 45, driven China back to feudalism, and organized fascist goon squads.

She also suggested the trains would not have run on time.

The author of tender love stories and a biography of Mao Tsetung, Han recited her good-versus-evil fairy tale to a standing-room-only crowd of 4,000 in Vancouver's Orpheum Theatre on behalf of the Canada-China Friendship Association. In 15 minutes she summarized a history of the Chinese revolution and spent the rest of her 90 minutes attacking the "Gang of Four."

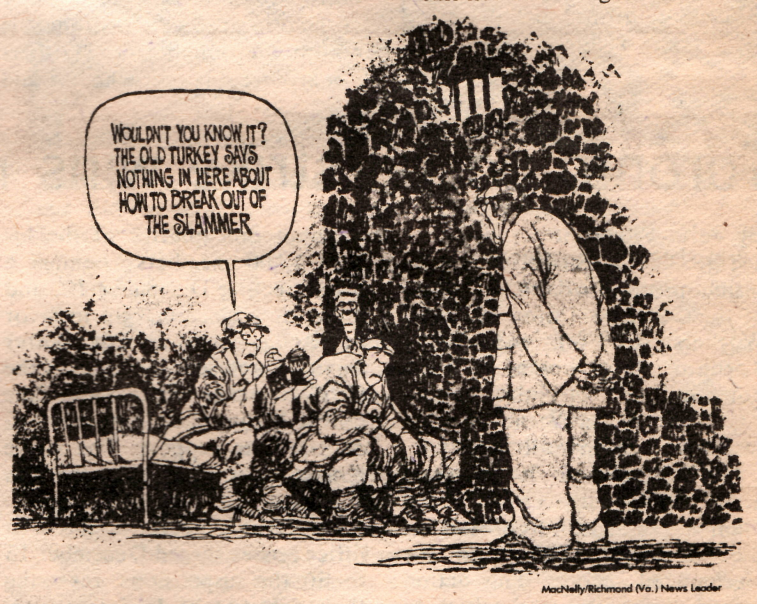
Though she stopped short of blaming the "Four" for the earthquake deaths (as others have done) she did mention they were too busy plotting to visit the cities affected.

In a masterful display of doublethink, the charismatic romanticist spoke of the "Cultural Revolution": "Without the Cultural Revolution, the Gang of Four would never have been got rid of . . . but the Cultural Revolution had its good side and its bad side.

"At that time, the Four and Lin Piao not only sounded revolutionary, they looked revolutionary. But power corrupted them, and they were responsible for the bad side of the Cultural Revolution—the violence."

Left unexplained was Mao's intimate relation to the "Gang of Four." His connection with them was not oppositional and it is well known that he stage-managed their rise to the highest positions of power. In Han's grim apology for the fierce inter-bureaucratic struggle, Mao remains deified.

For if the slanders are true, if the "Four" had sought to divert every movement away from the "true course," why didn't the highest leader—the party chairman—and the majority of the party leadership oppose or dare to stop them? Were they all sleeping? Or didn't they dare to oppose the "Four"? Or were they simply unable to stop the "Four"?



MacNelly/Richmond (Va.) News Leader

Well, yes. According to Han all these are true: "Of the 19 central committee members six were provincial members and couldn't get to all the meetings, five were either very sick or very old, and two were scared." Hence, a majority.

But Han Suyin was never fooled. A carefully orchestrated question period followed her recitation, but one delightful question slipped in: "Would you want to rewrite some of your books in the light of recent disclosures?"

"Uh, well not about Mao, but about Chiang Ch'ing," said Han. "I was baffled by her. I was always told she would have nothing to do with violence. None of her speeches say anything about violence (at least none of her *public* speeches).

"But she changed her mind a lot. My husband and I used to call her our Caligula. I would say she was mentally deranged. . . . If I were to rewrite my book I would only add that I had too much respect for Mao to say what I wanted about his wife."

Suyin, we were told by way of introduction, means "plain speaking."

George Little/Socialist Voice

3,000 UBC students marched to protest fee increases and education cutbacks, March 1, 1977.

Picket Board of Governors

UBC students fight cutbacks

By Grant Elgaard

VANCOUVER—Pouring rain failed to deter about 30 University of British Columbia (UBC) students from picketing the Board of Governors meeting December 6. The students were demanding that the board refuse to implement education cutbacks and instead send the university's budget back to the provincial government with a demand for adequate funding. The picket was organized by the campus Cutbacks Committee.

Last year's UBC budget included a 25-40 percent tuition fee hike, a $3.1 million cut in expenditures, and subsequent reductions in staff. These cutbacks provoked an angry demonstration of 3,000 students March 1.

This year, with hints of more cutbacks in the offing, UBC president Doug Kenny has been forced by student pressure to speak out publicly against the cutbacks. He even joined the picket briefly, telling students "I, too, am concerned about cutbacks. . . . I would hope students would cooperate with the university administration and faculty in this critical issue. . . ."

But Kenny rejected students' demands that the university refuse to accept a cutbacks budget as "not a sensible course of action."

Such a move would bring the Board of Governors into direct confrontation with the Socred government and force the issue into the public eye. But it would also mean that Kenny and board members would be putting their posh jobs on the line over the issue of the education cutbacks. This they seem reluctant to do.

The education cutbacks are a glaring example of the anti-student stand of the Social Credit government. The provincial budget is projecting an $11 million surplus for the education department. Other B.C. government departments expect large surpluses as well. ICBC, the government-run insurance corporation, made so much money this year that embarrassed Socreds are going to lower the rates.

The elected leaders of the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) have gotten a lot of mileage out of their verbal opposition to the cutbacks. But they have refused to help organize and lead an anticutbacks fight.

Instead the cutbacks committee has been continually thwarted by the general inertia of the SRA and also by occasional deliberate obstruction by some SRA members.

In the face of this situation a group of students is organizing an action slate for the January 17 student elections. The election of such a slate, committed to actively organizing students, would open the door to an effective fight against the cutbacks.

Students protest Algoma closing

By Brian Burch

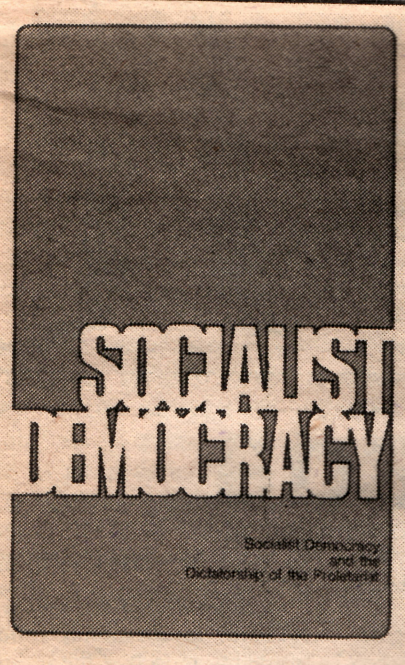
SAULT STE. MARIE—Students at Algoma University College here are organizing to fight a proposal to close the college at the end of the current school year.

The report of the Whiteside Royal Commission, made public December 13, said "the College is irreversibly destined to collapse" because of low enrollment and "scarce resources." The report recommended that the provincial government close the college in June 1978.

On December 15, within 48 hours of the release of the Whiteside report, students met to organize a campaign to "save Algoma." A rally at the Queen's Park provincial legislature in Toronto has been planned for the first week of February.

Students decided to seek the support of the Sault Ste. Marie and District Labor Council and other local groups. A publicity campaign is being organized. A series of committees have been set up to carry out the work.

The proposed closure of Algoma College is the latest government attack on the educational system. Students from across Ontario must join Algoma students in the fight to stop the closure.



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International Women's Day

An opening for feminist unity

By Andrea Goth and Jackie Larkin

From antirape protests to unionizing workers, and from unionizing bankworkers, and from discussions among feminist activists conferences of union women, 1977 was a year of renewal for the women's liberation movement in English Canada.

women's liberation have been germinating and taking root among growing numbers of working women. Today, the first fruits are beginning to show.

And 1978 holds the promise that the women's movement will burst forth in full blossom: a bright, red rose of discussion and activity. This inspiring possibility is best expressed in the B.C. Federation of Women's (BCFW) call for a cross-country mobilization on March 8, International Women's Day, in response to attacks on our rights.

Changing situation

A few years ago a major cross-country action of the women's movement on March 8 would not have been possible. But today the BCFW call reflects a changing situation.

For two or three years, the political activity of the women's movement declined. We turned inward. Our forces were fragmented.

Today, feminists feel a pressing need to respond as the gains we fought for come increasingly under attack. Our victories in the areas of abortion, childcare, and employment—partial as they were—are rapidly disappearing. Our standard of living is under attack, eaten away by wage controls and social service cutbacks.

Guardians of the family, bourgeois morality, and all that is rotten in patriarchal capitalism have proclaimed the women's movement dead. For them, times of economic insecurity and social decay are ripe for putting women back in their place and crusading against lesbians and gays.

But across the country, in discussion groups, collectives, public meetings, and conferences, feminists are talking about how to defend and extend women's rights.

A resurgence of public activity by the women's movement has developed. The call for November 5 antirape actions found a quick, spontaneous response in many cities, demonstrating, even if in a modest way, the ability to organize across English Canada.

A new desire to grapple with political directions for the women's liberation movement coincides with, and partially reflects, another very significant development.

Many women who were not directly affected by the earlier rise of women's struggles are now taking up the fight.

Feminist ideas have spread among working women; and in a situation where these women are hardest hit by ruling-class attacks on the whole working class, this has led many to discover the close relation between their superexploitation as workers and their oppression in the role of wife and mother.

More and more working women are beginning to understand that to fight against their oppression as workers they must challenge their oppression as women—and vice versa. And, most importantly, they are taking action.

Special conferences of women in the labor movement have been organized in Saskatchewan and northern Ontario, drawing significant participation. The Canadian Labor Congress is sponsoring a three-day meeting on equal pay and equal opportunity in January.

The fight for equal pay has grown stronger through battles in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, and elsewhere. Women's committees have formed in most provincial union federations and women's caucuses are beginning to appear in some union locals. The bankworkers organizing drive, spearheaded by the Service, Office, and Retail Workers Union of Canada, has been a big victory for women workers.

Celebrate our strength

In this situation, the BCFW call for March 8 actions has a special importance. We can celebrate International Women's Day by demonstrating the growth and determination of our movement.

We can deliver our message loud and clear—whatever our differences, we are able to unite in action to defend ourselves.

Through successful March 8 actions we can begin to unite different feminist collectives and services, union militants, unorganized working women, and different political currents in the women's movement. The strength that comes from such uniy can help broaden our ranks and ensure future victories.

March 8 protests in Quebec, Europe

Linking their arms together in the streets of English Canada March 8, supporters of women's liberation will join women in Quebec, Europe, and around the world in a renewal of the tradition of International Women's Day.

For three decades, this tradition was neglected amidst claims of a marked improvement in women's condition.

But March 8 is re-emerging as a day of solidarity with the worldwide struggle of women for their liberation. And today's demands and struggles show a significant similarity to those raised by pioneers of women's liberation: economic and sexual independence and the freedom to control our lives.

In Quebec in recent years, mass demonstrations on these themes have been organized jointly by women's committees of the three main union federations and the women's movement. This year preparations are under consideration for an action in support of free abortion on demand.

Last year on March 8, Spanish women's groups organized under the slogan: "Not a single woman in prison! Not a single woman out of a job!" In one city, 1,000 people defied a government ban to demonstrate, demanding equal pay, free abortion and contraception, and amnesty for political prisoners.

In northern Italy, work ground to a halt as assemblies were held in many factories where women work. In Belgium, 7,000 marched for abortion rights. And marches took place in most French cities, demanding abortion, childcare, the right to work, and the right to a decent wage.

Rouge

Hugo Blanco to tour Canada

By Beverly Bernardo

TORONTO—Peruvian peasant leader Hugo Blanco will tour English Canada and Quebec in February 1978. Blanco is currently speaking in cities throughout the United States.

Blanco is well known as a leader of a mass land-reform struggle of Quechua-speaking Indian farmers in Peru in the early 1960s. For his political activities Blanco was charged with murder and sentenced to death. An international protest campaign saved his life, and finally won him amnesty in 1970.

Since then, Blanco's revolutionary politics have won him the widespread hatred of Latin-American rulers. A few months after his release, he was deported from Peru to Mexico. From there, he went to Argentina where in 1972 the government threw him into prison without charges. After international protests, he was allowed to leave for Chile.

In the 1973 rightist coup that overthrew the Chilean government of Salvador Allende, Blanco narrowly escaped death by seeking asylum in the Swedish embassy. He was allowed to return to Peru in 1975, only to be deported again a few months later. He currently resides in Sweden.

During his incarceration in Peru's infamous El Fronton Island prison, Blanco wrote *Land or Death*, a dramatic account of his experiences in the peasant movement. In his book, Blanco argues against both the "peaceful road to socialism" and the guerrilla-warfare strategy advocated by many currents in the Latin-American left.

U.S. tour

Blanco's U.S. tour comes after a victorious, two-year battle to obtain a visa from the U.S. State Department. The government's reasons for denying him the visa are clear. In the first weeks of his tour, Blanco has already spoken to thousands about "Carter and Human Rights in Latin America: Myth Versus Reality."

In San Antonio, Texas Blanco received a standing ovation when he spoke at the opening rally of the national Chicano/Latino anti-deportation conference October 28.

Blanco addressed a Minneapolis, Minnesota conference sponsored by the American Indian Movement, the International Indian Treaty Council, and the Federation of Survival Schools in early November. He described the similar plight of Native people under white rule in North and South America: "They have stolen your lands just as they have stolen ours, killed those who wouldn't work for them, and attempted to destroy our cultures."

Stressing solidarity among Native people throughout the western hemisphere, Blanco read portions of a letter from Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier describing the inhuman conditions of his imprisonment. Peltier was deported from Canada in December 1976. Last April he was convicted on frame-up murder charges and, in June, sentenced to life in prison.

Broad response to 1974 tour

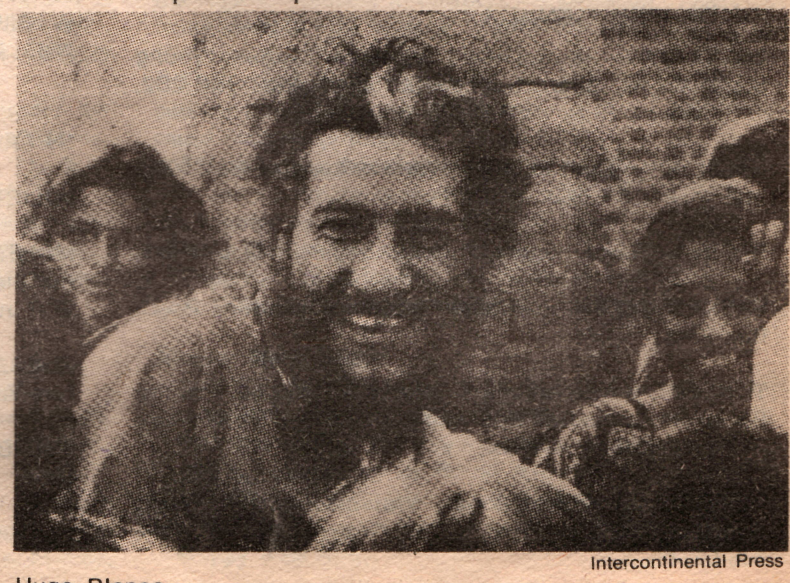
In late 1974, Blanco spoke to over 2,000 people on a tour of six Canadian cities. Sponsors of the 1974 tour included the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, Amnesty International No. 17, Council of the York Student Federation, and the Latin American Working Group.

Blanco's 1978 tour is being organized by the Hugo Blanco Tour Committee. His publisher, Pathfinder Press, is an initial sponsor. Blanco is scheduled to visit 10 cities in English Canada and Quebec.

Blanco will speak on the relationship between imperialist investment and political repression in Latin America, particularly in Chile.

Another aim of the tour will be to build international solidarity in the effort to free the thousands of political prisoners now held in jails throughout Latin America.

For further information on the Blanco tour, contact: Hugo Blanco Tour Committee, c/o Pathfinder Press, 25 Bulwer Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1A1.



Intercontinental Press

Hugo Blanco